REMARKS BY
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THE AVIATION/SPACE WRITERS ASSOCIATION 1986 NEWS CONFERENCE
MAY 14, 1986

HOW FAR SHOULD THE PRESS GO, CAN IT GO, IN REPORTING DEVELOPMENTS THAT SOME MIGHT FEEL THREATEN NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS?

Attitudes of government officials on this subject don't change much.

Truman, 1951 press conference:

> "Whether it be treason or not, it does the U.S. just as much harm for those military secrets to be made known to potential enemies through open publication as it does for military secrets to be given to an enemy through the clandestine operation of spies."

Almost every reporter I know -- and that includes some whom I regard as blatant ideologues who have the benevolent tolerance and often encouragement of their editors and publishers -- would argue that the press should not report developments that threaten national security interests.

Conversely, almost every official I know -- including those who are unrelenting critics of news organizations -- believe there is a need for the American public to possess as much information as possible to make informed judgments about the conduct of the government's business.

So the issue is a <u>definition</u> of what information threatens our interests, who decides that, and where responsibility lies.

My experience in government (with the Navy, the National Security Council, the White House staff, and as Assistant

Secretary for Public Affairs at the Defense Department) suggests that there's no more frustrating issue for our elected and appointed officials in the national security area than what we call "unlawful disclosure of classified information." The shorthand phrase for that, of course, is leaks. Now, I realize that sometimes our frustration is not with leaks of classified information, but with leaks about things we'd rather not have in the public arena. There is certainly a distinct difference, and there is a difference in motivation on the part of leakers.

Lloyd Norman, long-time military reporter for NEWSWEEK and the Chicago Tribune, categorized leakers as well as anyone. He said the classic varieties at the Pentagon are as follows:

- Infighter ("determined to win regardless of the means")

- Showoff ("a braggart who likes to demonstrate how important he is")

- Whistleblower ("a zealot who is convinced that his agency...is being mismanaged and only he has the right answers")

- The partisan ("feels his organization is being zapped by the rival's more glamorous or impressive weapon system or military mission")

- The true-blue good guy ("truly believes that an informed press is vital to a democracy")

- and compulsive talker ("bubbly with the latest flash").

- Three more basic ways to categorize leakers might be: (1) disaffected lower-level employees, (2) those opposed to a

program or trying to sell a program, and (3) senior officials. The third category is potentially the most damaging to national security, because of the sensitive information senior official often have access to. They may be in any one of Lloyd Norman's categories, and they may be so immersed in their aspect of a subject they may not be aware of the damage a leak can do to confidential sources of intelligence information. There's no excuse for them.

All of us in government believe that prevention should begin at home, and we should concentrate our efforts on educating our own people to the potential damage they can do, and stopping the hemorrhage at the source.

But what about the news organization's responsibilities? Do they have any? Are they morally free to print, without further judgment, whatever they can pick up?

George Lauder, the Director of Public Affairs at the Central Intelligence Agency, recently wrote to one news organization to express his agency's view on the disclosure and publication of sensitive intelligence information.

> "...many of the press put the blame for the hemorrhage of secrets on the leaker," he wrote, "but the press itself caters to such leakers, encourages their purposes and then absolves itself from the damage that results to the nation's security from its actions. In short, the press often carelessly tosses about the verbal hand grenades that a leaker hands it.

When they explode, killing people and inflicting great damage, the press shrugs and says in effect, well, it's a free country. It seems to those of us in the U.S. national security agencies who are endeavoring to protect this nation's security and thereby its freedoms, including the very freedom the press enjoys, that the press cannot have it both ways. The press is outraged when hostile spies are uncovered in the U.S., but happily conveys equally harmful information to our adversaries by printing very damaging leaks. Why aren't the leakers who have betrayed our government's trust condemned by the press at least to the same extent that it chastizes those who spend thousands of dollars for costly aircraft toilet seats? It seems to us there is a good deal of media hypocrisy in all this."

Well, I may not agree with all that George says, (and I certainly didn't give him the line about toilet seats, but had I given him the line, I would have called it a large molded plastic assembly covering the entire lavatory, which was resolved by the supplier refunding $29,000 out of $34,000 paid for 54 units after DOD questioned the cost.) But I do believe that what he has to say deserves some attention in these proceedings. My own views are on the record in a book I wrote a few years ago about reporters who cover the Defense Department, including one who is now my Principal Deputy at the Pentagon, former newsman Fred Hoffman, who covered defense for the AP for a quarter of a century, and whom I said "seems to have direct access to the

pouch of information circulated to a few officials with elevated security clearances and a need to know." Fred now tells me that a cardinal rule of his as a reporter was to avoid putting any information in his stories about intelligence sources and methods -- he sees no "public right to know" such things, and I agree with him that there are many things the public does not want to know, if publication will threaten national security interests.

My view is that defense reporters feel that they are at the cutting edge of the question of national security versus the people's need to know. They want to know what is going on. They want to report accurately about what is going on, and to illuminate policy issues. They want to do this in a professional manner, and to avoid hurting the country in the process.

In general, the ultimate national defense goal of reporters I know is about the same as the goal of those in the defense establishment they report about -- they want a strong and safe America. Sometimes, their profession calls on them to pursue that goal in ways that seem inconsistent, often wrong, to those who are not journalists.

That's still the issue -- what is best for America; and I feel this is an issue that reporters should take very seriously -- and frankly, I think that when they are in doubt, they should let their instinctive concern for national security overcome those perhaps more natural instincts to be first with the story and to have more in it than the reporters with whom they are competing.